United Nations A/59/PV.1

General Assembly

Fifty-ninth session

Official Records

1st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 14 September 2004, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President (*spoke in French*): I declare open the fifty-ninth regular session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Item 115 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/59/350)

The President (*spoke in French*): Before turning to the items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/59/350, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly in which he informs the Assembly that 13 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/59/350?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President (*spoke in French*): Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the fifty-ninth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Benin, Bhutan, China, Ghana, Liechtenstein, the Russian Federation, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and Uruguay.

May I take it that the Member States that I have mentioned are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items: reports of the General Committee

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences (A/59/351)

The President: The Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/59/351, which contains a letter dated 9 September 2004 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly.

Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of the regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly. Authorization is thus sought for the subsidiary organs cited in the letter, on the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those subsidiary organs of the Assembly listed in the letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to meet during the main part of the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

Address by the President

The President (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to express a few words regarding the victims of the hurricanes that have recently hit with full force the southern part of the United States, Jamaica, Grenada and Cuba and on this occasion to express all our compassion and solidarity to the Governments and populations of those countries during this terribly difficult time they are facing.

It is for me a singular honour and a true privilege, to assume, as of today, the presidency of the United Nations General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. The solemn opening of this session provides me with an opportunity to again express my deep gratitude, both for the tribute that has been paid to Africa and for the confidence that has been placed in my country, Gabon, its people and the initiatives of its President, His Excellency El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba.

Let me also convey my sincere congratulations to my predecessor, His Excellency The Hon. Mr. Julian Hunte, for the work he accomplished, in particular in the field of the revitalization of our work. I am also grateful for the great willingness and support that he and his cabinet showed throughout the transitional period.

I pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his efforts towards a more peaceful and more just world, and also for the resolve and vision that have been characteristic of his entire mandate at the head of the Secretariat of our Organization. In that tribute I associate all of the United Nations personnel, who work with such courage and dedication, often in extremely perilous conditions, at times paying the highest price for the cause of peace.

For my part, I wish to assure all representatives of Member States that I am entirely at their disposal to work with them in achieving the tasks they have entrusted to me and am determined to heed the concerns of their countries.

The present session is opening in an international context that is constantly and rapidly changing, marked by multiple threats and numerous challenges. In that situation, the peoples of the world more than ever turn their gaze towards the United Nations — the sole universal forum where the concerns and aspirations of all mankind are expressed in all their diversity.

The General Assembly must fully carry out the role assigned to it by the United Nations Charter, by mobilizing, to the greatest extent possible, all of its strengths. For my part, I intend to gear my endeavours to that end, in close cooperation with Members States and the other principal organs of the United Nations.

The many areas of conflict and humanitarian crises, the proliferation of weapons, the resurgence of terrorist acts, the spread of poverty and other scourges such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the deterioration of the environment, the resurgence of transnational crime, illicit trafficking in narcotics, human rights violations and infringements of the rule of law and democracy are so many concerns for which we must urgently find appropriate answers.

Another question which we must pursue through consultations is that of human cloning for purposes of reproduction, because of its ethical and scientific implications.

The dramatic repercussions of armed conflicts on the peoples of the Middle East, Africa, South America, Asia or Eastern Europe, remind us each day that we must again double our efforts towards the advent of a world free from the ravages of war.

The situation in the Middle East, in particular the Israeli-Palestinian question, demands sustained attention from the international community, because of its ramifications and its impact upon international peace and security. It is undoubtedly in that cradle of age-old civilizations that the future of all of us is, in large part, being played out.

The climate prevailing in Iraq and Afghanistan, inter alia, is still a source of great concern. In Africa, wars constitute the dominant source of insecurity, impoverishment and political instability. The Darfur crisis in the Sudan and the recent massacres of refugees on the border between Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are, alas, such deplorable situations.

It is therefore urgent and crucial to reconsider the coordination between intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations acting on the ground, in order to achieve more effective action concerning humanitarian issues. Similarly, there is a clear need to organize the international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region — an idea which has been accepted in principle.

Where peace processes are already underway, it is vital to do everything possible to support them by carrying out concrete measures aimed in particular towards the prevention of conflicts, disarmament, demobilization and the reintegration of former soldiers. Above all, we must ensure that sufficient resources are provided for post-war reconstruction efforts so as to prevent the possible reversion to instability and to avoid the risk of anarchy. Our Organization cannot shirk that responsibility.

The proliferation of weapons — especially small arms and light weapons — is contributing to an intensification of conflicts, with increasingly tragic consequences for civilians. Similarly, the ongoing threat to international peace and security represented by the existence of vast quantities of weapons of mass destruction reminds us daily of the imperative need to make progress towards general and complete disarmament. We must all work to that end.

We must act quickly so as to find the best means to combat terrorism more effectively. Indeed, the scope and tragic brutality of the events of recent years here in New York and elsewhere in the world demand that we take joint action and remain ever vigilant.

Yet, while issues of peace and security daily demand our attention, they should not divert us completely from equally pressing questions, such as development. As Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* so rightly puts it, "Development, the new name for peace".

We must therefore take action, together, on both fronts simultaneously. In this regard, I would like to stress the important contribution of civil society organizations, which are acting as the true partners of States by expanding their initiatives. If we truly wish to reduce disparities between and within nations and to increase our chances — and those of future generations — of living in a more equitable and secure world, we must abide by the development commitments that we have undertaken, especially those in the Millennium Declaration and the Monterrey Consensus.

We have no other choice. Our respective nations and peoples expect a great deal. We cannot turn a deaf ear to that legitimate aspiration for a better world — the legitimate demand for respect for human rights and human security, especially the security of the most vulnerable. Here, I would like to stress the important contribution that women are making to the building of society and to express the hope that their role will be increasingly recognized.

We must also vigorously combat trafficking in human beings, in particular in women and children. That is a duty imposed upon us by both law and morality.

The most disadvantaged continent — Africa — has taken its destiny into its own hands. Our

Organization has decided to accord it priority attention and to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) — a substantive programme inspired by the will of political leaders. The New Partnership for Africa's Development is an expression of the steadfast determination of the peoples of that continent to break with decades of pessimism.

Africa has the political support of the international community in that respect. It has also adopted a number of concrete measures, including the Peer Review Mechanism, with a view to promoting peace, good governance, human rights and democracy. But Africa also expects all of its development partners, in particular those of the Group of Eight, to fulfil their commitments entered into within that framework.

I should like to draw the attention of the international community to the necessity of better addressing the needs of the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries and the small island developing countries. We must work in a dedicated fashion to develop appropriate solutions. In that regard, the forthcoming Mauritius conference on the implementation of the Barbados Plan of Action for The Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States will be an important stepping stone.

Hunger and malnutrition are also urgent problems whose impact is crucial for disadvantaged populations. The figures speak for themselves; we cannot remain indifferent to them. More than 800 million people throughout the world now suffer from malnutrition, despite the fact that — according to the experts — global food production is adequate. It is therefore vital that the General Assembly focus its efforts on eradicating hunger and poverty in the world.

It is essential for the General Assembly, working together with the Economic and Social Council, to mobilize on issues pertaining to international trade negotiations, debt and financing for development, in view of the impact of those issues on the economic and social situation of developing countries.

We must strengthen relations among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council so as to reinforce the foundations of harmonious international cooperation. Such cooperation is all the more necessary in that it is essential to the achievement of the goals of the Organization. It should also enable us to preserve the role and authority of the General Assembly as the central deliberative body of the United Nations and the expression of the common will of the 191 States Members of the Organization.

To be sure, significant progress has already been achieved in revitalizing our work. We must, however, ensure that the General Assembly preserves all of its prerogatives. It is in our interest — and it is our collective responsibility — to halt the erosion of the authority of this important organ.

At the global level, it is clear that the changing circumstances of today's world call for our Organization to adapt on an ongoing basis so as to enable it better to respond to the requirements of the time. Thus — and this cannot be overemphasized — we must strengthen the role and authority of the United Nations and provide it with all the resources necessary to enable it to fulfil its many missions.

Strengthening the role of the United Nations will also depend on our efforts to reform the Security Council. Many proposals have already been made. We must, therefore, show the political will necessary to enable us to move ahead with this important question with a view to achieving a consensus formula.

Similarly, we must encourage greater cooperation between United Nations organs and regional and subregional organizations so that those organizations can strengthen their capacity to take more effective action on the ground.

The commemoration next year of the sixtieth anniversary of the Organization will provide us with an opportunity to take stock of the progress achieved since the Millennium Declaration and to look with equanimity towards the future. We must, therefore, pool our resources in preparing for that eagerly anticipated event. For my part, I shall ensure that the General Assembly assumes its responsibility in that respect.

I invite all the members of the Assembly to work together with a view to adapting the United Nations to the needs of our times and to preparing to better face current and future challenges. I will need all of your support in order to accomplish the delicate task that you have entrusted to me. Finally, I would like again to assure all Member States that I am entirely at their disposal to work together with them and to be ever attentive to their concerns and, of course, to their proposals.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.